Men and women have differences in their cognitive abilities

Cognitive abilities can be defined as our ability to use our brain for the purposes of learning, problem solving and paying attention. In this paper, I argue that women and men have no differences in their cognitive abilities because, 1) Although they have different learning styles, women and men learn effectively, 2) There is no significant difference in the way they problem solve and 3) Paying attention is subjective and hence hard to measure and operationalize.

Women and men have different learning styles\(^1\) but use the same resources to learn. Learning styles can be defined as an individuals’ ability to process information and their attitude in learning environments. According to Philbin et al. men are more abstract and reflective (traditional), while women are more conceptual. Men tend to function best in environments where they can observe and think, while women tend to prefer to observe and do. But these methods are used interchangeably between men and women depending on the task at hand.

When it comes to problem solving, the differences between men and women are very small and have been decreasing for the past several years. A study carried out by Hyde et al showed a difference in mathematical problem-solving skills across different age groups. Girls tended to dominate in elementary and middle school, while boys tended to dominate in high school and college. But these differences changed depending on the selection of the sample, which goes to show that the differences are negligible.

Paying attention is the ability to focus on a subject. Our ability to pay attention is dependent on our current mental state, our alert levels and interest in the subject matter. This differs from one individual to the other. Some topics are more interesting to women while other are more interesting to men in a general sense, but there is an overlap and this makes it difficult to even measure the difference.

Men and women have a lot of differences, ranging from how each sees the world and how they interpret the world around them, but by considering the way we learn, problem solve and pay attention, women and men have no explicit differences.

\(^1\) Philbin, M., Meier, E., Huffman, S. et al. Sex Roles (1995) 32: 485. [https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01544184](https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01544184)